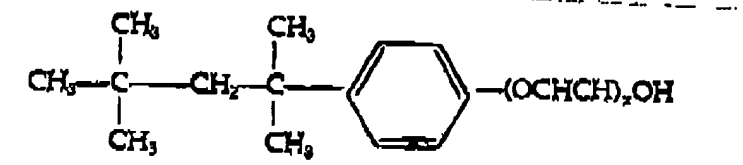
IN THE CLAIMS:

Please add new claims 20-26.

Claim 1 (original): A method of improving shrink-resistance of natural fibers, synthetic fibers, or mixtures thereof, or fabrics or yarns composed of natural fibers, synthetic fibers, or blends thereof, comprising contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with NaOH, H_2O_2, gluconic acid, dicyandiamide, and non-ionic surfactant, and optionally subsequently contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with protease and non-ionic surfactant and optionally sodium sulfite and optionally triethanolamine and optionally polyacrylamide polymer.

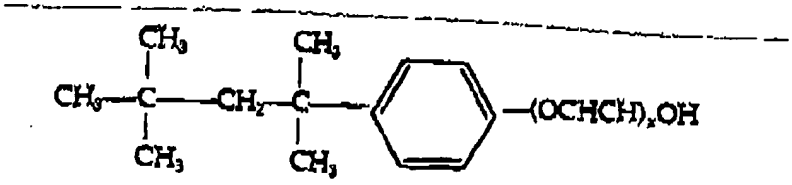
Claim 2 (original): The method according to claim 1, wherein said non-ionic surfactant is an alkylaryl polyether alcohol having the following structural formula:



in which x indicates the average number of ethylene oxide units in the ether side chain and x ranges from 7 to 10.

Claim 3 (original): The method according to claim 1, said method comprising contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with NaOH, H_2O_2, gluconic acid, dicyandiamide, and non-ionic surfactant, and subsequently contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with protease and optionally sodium sulfite and optionally triethanolamine and optionally polyacrylamide polymer.

Claim 4 (original): The method according to claim 3, wherein said non-ionic surfactant is an alkylaryl polyether alcohol having the following structural formula:

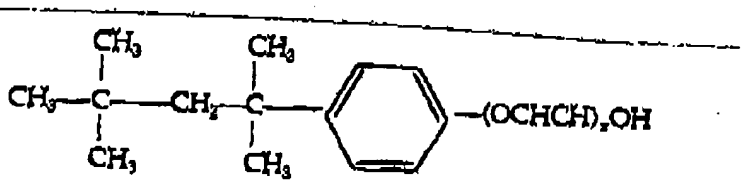


in which x indicates the average number of ethylene oxide units in the ether side chain and x ranges from 7 to 10.

Claim 5 (original): The method according to claim 4, wherein x is 9 to 10.

Claim 6 (original): The method according to claim 1, said method comprising contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with NaOH, H_2O_2, gluconic acid, dicyandiamide, and non-ionic surfactant; said method does not utilize protease.

Claim 7 (original): The method according to claim 6, wherein said non-ionic surfactant is an alkylaryl polyether alcohol having the following structural formula:

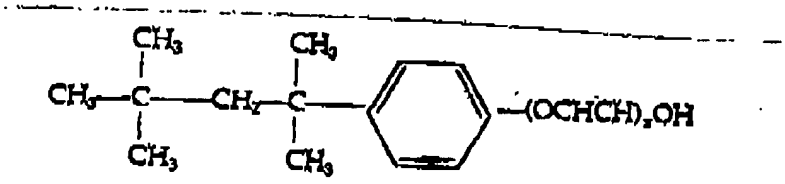


in which x indicates the average number of ethylene oxide units in the ether side chain and x ranges from 7 to 10.

Claim 8 (original): The method according to claim 7, wherein x is 7 to 8.

Claim 9 (original): The method according to claim 1, said method comprising contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with NaOH, H_2O_2, gluconic acid, dicyandiamide, and non-ionic surfactant, and subsequently contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with protease, sodium sulfite, triethanolamine, and non-ionic surfactant, and optionally polyacrylamide polymer.

Claim 10 (original): The method according to claim 9, wherein said non-ionic surfactant is an alkylaryl polyether alcohol having the following structural formula:



in which x indicates the average number of ethylene oxide units in the ether side chain and x ranges from 7 to 10.

Claim 11 (original): The method according to claim 10, wherein x is 7 to 8.

Claim 12 (original): The method according to claim 1, wherein said method does not utilize dichloroisocyanuric acid, chloroamines, peroxymonosulfuric acid, monoperoxyphthalic acid, permanganate, chlorine gas, sodium hypochlorite, or aminoplast resins.

Claim 13 (original): The method according to claim 3, wherein x is 7 to 8 or 9 to 10.

Claim 14 (original): A product produced by the method according to claim 1.

Claim 15 (previously added): A method of improving shrink-resistance of natural fibers, synthetic fibers, or mixtures thereof, or fabrics or yarns composed of natural fibers, synthetic fibers, or blends thereof, consisting essentially of contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with NaOH, H_2O_2, gluconic acid, dicyandiamide, and non-ionic surfactant, and optionally subsequently contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with protease and non-ionic surfactant and optionally sodium sulfite and optionally triethanolamine and optionally polyacrylamide polymer.

Claim 16 (previously added): The method according to claim 1, said method consisting essentially of contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with NaOH, H_2O_2, gluconic acid, dicyandiamide, and non-ionic surfactant, and subsequently contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with protease and optionally sodium sulfite and optionally triethanolamine and optionally polyacrylamide polymer.

Claim 17 (previously added): The method according to claim 1, said method consisting essentially of contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with NaOH, H_2O_2, gluconic acid, dicyandiamide, and non-ionic surfactant; said method does not utilize protease.

Claim 18 (previously added): The method according to claim 1, said method consisting essentially of contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with NaOH, H_2O_2, gluconic acid, dicyandiamide, and non-ionic surfactant, and subsequently contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with protease, sodium sulfite, triethanolamine, and non-ionic surfactant, and optionally polyacrylamide polymer.

Claim 19 (previously added): The method according to claim 1, said method consisting essentially of contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with NaOH, H_2O_2, gluconic acid, dicyandiamide, and non-ionic surfactant.

Claim 20 (new): The method according to claim 1, said method comprising contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with NaOH, H_2O_2, gluconic acid, dicyandiamide, and non-ionic surfactant at a temperature between about 30°C and about 45°C, and optionally subsequently contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with protease and non-ionic surfactant and optionally sodium sulfite and optionally triethanolamine and optionally polyacrylamide polymer.

Claim 21 (new): The method according to claim 1, said method comprising contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with NaOH, H_2O_2, gluconic acid, dicyandiamide, and non-ionic

surfactant at 30°C-45°C, and optionally subsequently contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with protease and non-ionic surfactant and optionally sodium sulfite and optionally triethanolamine and optionally polyacrylamide polymer.

Claim 22 (new): The method according to claim 1, said method comprising contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with NaOH, H_2O_2, gluconic acid, dicyandiamide, and non-ionic surfactant at a temperature between about 30°C and about 40°C, and optionally subsequently contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with protease and non-ionic surfactant and optionally sodium sulfite and optionally triethanolamine and optionally polyacrylamide polymer.

Claim 23 (new): The method according to claim 1, said method comprising contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with NaOH, H_2O_2, gluconic acid, dicyandiamide, and non-ionic surfactant at 30°C-40°C, and optionally subsequently contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with protease and non-ionic surfactant and optionally sodium sulfite and optionally triethanolamine and optionally polyacrylamide polymer.

Claim 24 (new): The method according to claim 1, said method comprising contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with NaOH, H_2O_2, gluconic acid, dicyandiamide, and non-ionic surfactant at a reaction temperature between about 30°C and about 45°C, and optionally subsequently contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with protease and non-ionic surfactant and optionally sodium sulfite and optionally triethanolamine and optionally polyacrylamide polymer at a temperature between about 40°C and about 55°C.

Claim 25 (new): The method according to claim 1, said method comprising contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with NaOH, H_2O_2, gluconic acid, dicyandiamide, and non-ionic surfactant at a reaction temperature between about 30°C and about 45°C, and optionally subsequently contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with protease and non-ionic surfactant and optionally sodium sulfite and optionally triethanolamine and optionally polyacrylamide polymer at 40°C-55°C.

Claim 26 (new): The method according to claim 1, said method comprising contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with NaOH, H_2O_2, gluconic acid, dicyandiamide, and non-ionic surfactant at a reaction temperature between about 30°C and about 45°C, and optionally subsequently contacting said fibers or fabric or yarn with protease and non-ionic surfactant and optionally sodium sulfite and optionally triethanolamine and optionally polyacrylamide polymer at a temperature between about 40°C and about 55°C and subsequently inactivating said protease.